METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR PACKING AND
BI-DIRECTIONAL COOLING OF PRODUCE

ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION

Method for improved packing and cooling of produce. According to the present invention, baskets for the packing of fruit are provided with ventilation channels disposed upon a lower surface of the basket. Vent apertures communicate between the ventilation channels and the produce stored in the baskets. Upper vents are formed on four sides of an upper portion of the baskets. After packing the baskets with produce, they are loaded into trays. The trays may be provided with tray vents that align with the ventilation channels. Alternatively, the trays may be formed without tray vents to improve some cooling regimes. In this manner, entire pallets of produce-filled baskets, oriented in either the "X" or "Y" directions can be efficiently chilled by introducing a flow of cooling air into the baskets and thence through the produce packed inside, regardless of the orientation of the trays. The trays and baskets are sized so as to occupy all of the surface area of a standard shipping pallet, and to minimize the movement of the baskets within the trays, and of the trays with respect to one another.